

306 FRENCH REVOLUTION AS A WORLD FORCE

to the municipalities. " Your Majesty/⁹ deckred
Hardenberg
to Frederick William III, "we must do from
above what the
French have done from below." He was as good
as his word;
for he completed the creation of a free
peasantry, and his work
has been proudly claimed by Cavaignac as the
most indubitable
testimony to the action of the French Revolution
on European
society.

The most remarkable German tribute to
the creative
energies of the Revolution comes from
Gneisenau. The great
soldier detested French ideas and spent his life
fighting the
forces which they unchained ; but he recognized
the strength
that France had derived from them and was
eager to apply
the lesson. " One cause above all others has
raised France
to this pinnacle of greatness," he wrote after
Jena; " the
Revolution awakened all her powers and gave to
every indi-
vidual a suitable field for his activity. What
infinite aptitudes
slumber undeveloped in the bosom of a nation !
In the breasts
of thousands resides real genius. Why do not
the Courts take
steps to open iip a career to it wherever it is
found, to en-
courage talents and virtues whatever the rank ?
Why did they
not seize this opportunity to multiply their
powers a thousand-
fold, to open to the simple bourgeois the Arc
de Triomphe
through which only the noble can now pass ?
The new era
requires more than old names, titles, and
parchments. The
Revolution has set the whole strength of a
nation in motion,
and by the equalization of the different classes
and the equal
taxation of property converted the living
strength in man and
the dead strength in resources into a productive
capital, and
thereby upset the old relations of States. If
other States
decide to restore this equilibrium, they must
appropriate the
results of this Revolution. They will thus

reap the double
advantage of being able to mobilize their
whole national
strength against another Power and of escaping
the danger of
a revolution, which hangs over them so long as
they refuse to
. obviate a forcible change by a voluntary
transformation/

The French Revolution was compared by
Klinger to the
magic works of Medea, who cast the dead limbs
of age into
the boiling cauldron to emerge young and
beautiful;
Georg Forster expressed the wish that his
country would
warm itself at the flame without being burned.
The aspiration
was destined in large measure to be fulfilled.
While in England
the reform movement was thrown back forty
years by the
earthquake, in Germany it was strengthened
and accelerated.